

Come to Understanding

**They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24**

April 14, 2011

Volume 10 Number 8

The Righteousness of God

In Paul's early work as a missionary he attended a Jewish synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia. After the Scriptures were read, he was given an opportunity to say a few words:

- 14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.
- 15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, *You men and brethren*, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. -Acts 13

Rising to the occasion, Paul expounded upon the Scriptures, explaining the historical journey of the people of Israel. These people, he said, were freed from Egyptian bondage by the "high arm" (the power) of God:

- 16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand said, Men of Israel, and you that fear God, give audience.
- 17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it. -Acts 13

Many years earlier, when God had chosen Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, He made sure they knew who He was by revealing to them His name:

- 13 And Moses said to God, Behold, *when* I come to the children of Israel, and shall say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say to them?
- 14 And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.
- 15 And God said moreover to Moses, Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, Yahweh God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: *this is* my name forever, and *this is* my memorial unto all generations. -Exodus 3

To accomplish His purpose, which was to save His people Israel out of Egypt, Yahweh brought a series of plagues upon the land. The final plague was that of death, from which Yahweh spared Israel by the blood of the "Passover" lamb that they put on the door posts of their houses:

- 11 And thus shall you eat it; *with* your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: *it is* Yahweh's passover.
- 12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* Yahweh.
- 13 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you *are*: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt. -Exodus 12

Yahweh did not remove Israel from Egypt before the plagues, but only after the final plague. He thereby showed them His power by miraculously protecting them from death during that tumultuous time.

As Paul continued speaking to the Jews in the synagogue, he explained that Yahweh eventually made David the King of Israel and that Yahshua (Jesus) was raised up as the "seed" of David to be the Savior of Israel:

- 23 Of this man's seed has God according to *his* promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Yahshua: -Acts 13
- Even though the Jews had been reading the Scriptures on every Sabbath day proclaiming the Savior, most of them could not comprehend that He had come:
- 27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*. -Acts 13

In their confusion, they had Him put to death, "but God raised Him from the dead:"

- 28 And though they found no cause for death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.
- 29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulcher.
- 30 But God raised him from the dead: -Acts 13

Just as the Passover lamb had been sacrificed in Egypt to spare the lives of the people of Israel, Yahshua the Messiah offered Himself as our Passover sacrifice. Paul explains:

- 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even the Messiah our passover is sacrificed for us: -1 Corinthians 5

**So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8**

Come to Understanding

Paul knew and taught what many of us have yet to learn. The law of Moses, while showing us our need for a Savior, cannot justify us for our sins. We can only be justified by faith that Yahshua is the Savior who offered His life as the sacrificial payment to purchase the forgiveness of our sins:

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. -Acts 13

Yahweh counted Abraham (Abram) as righteous simply because he believed in Him:

6 And he believed in Yahweh; and he counted it to him for righteousness. -Genesis 15

Yahweh counted Abraham as righteous long before He gave the law to Israel through Moses. Abraham was not an Israelite, nor was he a Jew. He was the grandfather of Israel, whose other name was Jacob. The descendents of two of Jacob's sons, Judah and Benjamin, represented the Kingdom of Judah, and are sometimes called the "Jews." Therefore, Abraham's righteousness had nothing to do with being of Israel and it had nothing to do with being a Jew. His righteousness was given to him because of his faith in the promises of Yahweh.

Centuries after the law was given to Israel, the leaders of the Jews who claimed to keep the laws of Moses actually added their own traditions and commandments to them as supposed conditions for salvation. Yahshua said that their worship was in vain:

7 However in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. -Mark 7

If righteousness could be acquired through the flesh, then Paul would have reckoned himself to be among the most righteous of all. His credentials seemed spotless:

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinks that he has whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the congregation; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. -Philippians 3

However, Paul said all of this meant nothing! Those things that he previously thought were of great importance toward his salvation, he now counted as loss:

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for the Messiah. -Philippians 3

It doesn't matter, Paul said, whether we are a Jew (an Israelite) or a Greek (a Gentile). Our fleshly pedigree has nothing to do with our salvation, for it is given to everyone that believes. Our righteousness comes from God, who justifies us in Himself by making our wrongs right in His eyes. His only condition is that we must believe Him. If we are justified, then we are "just" and we live by faith:

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of the Messiah: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. -Romans 1

Paul learned that he had no righteousness of his own. He concluded that righteousness is of God and that he could only receive it from Him by faith. He needed to believe the promise that the Messiah died for his sins, which He confirmed by demonstrating His power over death through His resurrection!

9 And be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of the Messiah, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. -Philippians 3

The great deception for all of us, as it also was with the unbelieving Jews, is to think of ourselves as being righteous because of what we either do or don't do. This self-righteousness prevents us from seeing our desperate need for a Savior and for the righteousness of God. Submitting ourselves to the righteousness of God requires humble repentance for our sins, as we believe they are completely paid for through the sacrificial death of Yahshua the Messiah:

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.

4 For the Messiah *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. -Romans 10

Keeping the laws of Moses, and the added traditions, could not save the Jews from their sins. How much less could salvation come to us through the created laws and traditions of a new religious system, which many call "the church?" Are we still vainly trusting in our own goodness? Or have we finally submitted ourselves to the righteousness of God?

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